



County of San Luis Obispo, California

## **PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**

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### **COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM TRANSMITTAL**

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission

**FROM:** County Parks

**SUBJECT:** Request for Parks & Recreation Commission to endorse the First Amendment to the San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District), and County Parks Operating Agreement Dated June 3, 2008.

**DATE:** December 12, 2013

#### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended the Parks and Recreation Commission:

1. Endorse the First Amendment to the District and County Parks Operating Agreement Dated June 3, 2008; and,
2. Recommend that Camp French fees be discounted by 20% for all youth oriented Non Profit (501 c3) organizations.

#### **Discussion:**

Boy Scouts of America, Los Padres Council (BSA) have operated Camp Mabel French (Camp) within the Lopez Lake Recreation Area (LLRA) through a Lease Agreement (Lease) with the Flood Control and Water Conservation District (District) since the early 1960's. Please see Attachment 1 – Site Map of Camp and LLRA. Recently BSA leadership contacted County Parks to discuss plans for their potential exit from management and operations of Camp Mabel French. To date BSA has not terminated the Lease and continues to operate the Camp.

County Parks has examined ways and means of continuing the Camp services should BSA determine to terminate the Lease. There are three options for actions:

1. The District could operate Camp French through selecting a new operator with a request for Proposals process.
2. The District could allow the property to close and no longer be available for public use.
3. The District could allow County Parks to operate Camp French in similar fashion as it has operated the recreation and utility facilities within the LLRA.

Both County Parks and County Public Works believes option number three is the most long term viable alternative for the ongoing operation of the Camp. If the amendment is approved, and based upon a future BSA decision to terminate their existing Lease, County Parks would provide near immediate operation of the Camp. To efficiently serve customers, staff would re-align some of the existing group camping areas into smaller camping areas and retain several large group camping areas. Due to the

layout of the Camp, these areas could be rented entirely, individually or in any combination. Additionally the lodge would be used as an event center for weddings, business retreats, team building functions, parties and other events.

An amendment to the current the Operating Agreement between the District and County Parks is needed to accomplish this change in operations and management if and when BSA terminates the Lease. Please see Attachment 2–Amendment to District and County Operating Agreement for LLRA. This amendment would add Camp French acreage to the acreage currently maintained by County Parks for public recreation within the LLRA. This amendment would be valid until December 31, 2014 and would only be placed into effect if BSA terminates their Lease. The Board of Supervisors, acting as the Flood Control and Water Conservation District Board, must approve this amendment for the District to affect the operations transfer. The Board of Supervisors must also approve this amendment for County Parks to affect the operations transfer.

Should termination of the BSA Lease occur, BSA remains interested in several key areas including:

- ***Retain the name of Camp Mabel French and related facilities.***

County Parks sees this interest aligned with existing practices that name facilities consistent with historical, natural, regional or cultural importance. The Camp has had the official name Camp Mabel French as it was named after the wife of the couple that was instrumental in establishing the Camp in the early 1960's. Names of other facilities such as the Eagle Walk are also consistent with current practice and would remain in place.

- ***Use by youth-focused non-profit groups should be encouraged through some sort of priority enhancement and/or fee reduction.***

County Parks sees the need for youth-oriented community non-profit groups to provide camping experiences for our youth. This is consistent with its Mission to provide diverse recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of the County. County Parks would support a percentage discount for San Luis Obispo County, youth oriented non-profit (501 c-3) organizations as approved by the Board of Supervisors during the annual Fee Resolution process. Prior to Board action on this, County Parks would provide a promotional 20% discount for all youth oriented non-profit (501 c-3) organizations. This 20% discount was supported by the District Advisory Committee, Zone 3 when it reviewed this topic on November 21, 2013. The Board of Supervisors may approve an amount different than this promotional amount each year when they address the fee resolution during the annual budget cycle.

Additionally, reservations priorities could be established. However, the newly implemented on-line County Park reservations system will allow all groups to place reservations one-year in advance. Some reservations will likely already be in place by BSA if County Parks assumes operations. Those reservations would be youth oriented groups and would be honored. Each organization could then place their next year's reservation on the first day of their existing reservation. The strong likelihood is that these existing use patterns will continue and be supported by the new system if the user groups follow through in a timely fashion.

- ***The history of BSA construction and maintenance of the Camp should be retained.***

County Parks sees this is consistent with our Mission that also states we are to protect natural, cultural and historic resources. The history of BSA and Scouting at the Camp should be retained and contained in interpretive exhibits that could be constructed through "Eagle Scout" projects.

County Parks would pursue efforts to educate all visitors of the history of the region from indigenous populations to current uses. The important BSA plaques and memorabilia should be incorporated into displays that could be enjoyed by all visitors.

If the Parks and Recreation Commission endorse this amendment, the next step would be for the amendment to be considered by the Board of Supervisors for final action. This would likely occur in early January 2014.

**Other Agency Involvement:**

On November 21, 2013 the District Advisory Committee, Zone 3 endorsed this amendment and also recommended that Camp French fees be discounted by 20% for all youth oriented Non Profit (501 c3) organizations.

SLO County Parks, Real Property Services, Public Works and County Counsel worked collaboratively with BSA in order to develop an appropriate exit strategy for BSA.

**Financial Considerations:**

Approval of the Amendment to the District and County Parks Operating Agreement for Lopez Lake Recreation Area, Dated June 3, 2008 will have costs and revenues as outlined in Attachment 3, Camp Mable French Assessment. Attachment 3 estimates that operating revenues would exceed expenses and allow funds to be placed into Lopez Lake Project Reserves and other Park funds for future operations, infrastructure and/or improvements. Future County Park operating budgets for Camp French would continue to be approved by the Board of Supervisors.

**Attachments**

1. Att. 1 Camp French & LLRA Site Map
2. Att. 2 Amendment to District and County Parks for Operating LLRA
3. Att. 3 Camp Mabel French Assessment